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ABSTRACT

This study provides a brief overview of the current status of performance funding programs around the country, and compares California's Partnership for Excellence for Community Colleges with programs applicable to two-year institutions in five other states: Florida, Illinois, Missouri, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The comparative analysis follows the critical components of any performance funding program: purpose(s) of the program, performance indicators, indicator weights, funding levels, allocation methods, and success criteria. It also discusses the advantages and disadvantages of Partnership for Excellence as compared with the other five programs. The use of performance as a factor in funding public higher education institutions takes one of two forms: performance funding ties specific dollar amounts to measured institutional results on each of the designated indicators; performance budgeting allows governors and legislators to "consider" campus performance as one factor in determining the total allocation for an institution. In 1999, 30 states were using either one or both of these approaches. California's Partnership for Excellence (PFE) program includes five major goals: degrees, transfers, course completion, remedial education, and workforce development. For each indicator under the five goals, the state considers the 1995-96 data as baseline and provides targets to be achieved by the 107 community colleges by 2005-2006. Appended are the performance funding categories for two-year institutions in California, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, South Carolina, and Tennessee. (JA)

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Newcomers to Performance Funding: A Comparison of California's Partnership for Excellence to Other Performance Funding Programs

Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research, Cincinnati, OH, May 21-24, 2000

Andreea M. Serban

Abstract

Performance funding is not a new idea, Tennessee has experimented it since 1974. However, renewed interest in this budgetary method has emerged in the 1990s. Three consecutive surveys of the fifty states conducted in 1997, 1998 and 1999 (Burke and Serban, 1997, 1998a; Burke and Modaressi, 1999) indicate that states are increasingly using or considering the use of some performance component in their higher education budgets. This interest seems to have been fueled by the discontent of state policy makers with traditional budgeting and apparent failure of reforms such as student assessment and performance reporting to significantly improve quality and increase accountability, efficiency, and productivity of higher education.

This study provides a brief overview of the current status of performance funding programs around the country, and compares California's Partnership for Excellence for Community Colleges to programs applicable to two-year institutions in five other states: Florida, Illinois, Missouri, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The comparative analysis follows the critical components of any performance funding program: purpose(s) of the program, performance indicators, indicator weights, funding levels, allocation methods, and success criteria. It also discusses the advantages and disadvantages of Partnership for Excellence as compared to the other five programs.

Introduction and Perspectives

Linking budgets to performance has been a "hot" topic for state governments and public colleges and universities during the 1990s. Performance funding seems a corrective for the apparent flaws in traditional budgeting. Funding public colleges and universities for current costs, inflationary increases, projected enrollments, and new initiatives has encouraged growth in students, programs, personnel, and budgets. This "cost plus" approach has discouraged expenditure reduction, resource reallocation, program redirection and administrative restructuring (Serban and Burke, 1998).

The use of performance as a factor in funding public higher education institutions takes one of two forms (Burke, Modarresi, and Serban, 1999):

- Performance funding ties specific dollar amounts to measured institutional results on each of the designated indicators. The link is automatic and formulaic.
- Performance budgeting allows governors and legislators, or coordinating or system boards, to "consider" campus performance as one factor in determining the total allocation for an institution. The tie between performance and allocation is, in this case, loose and discretionary.

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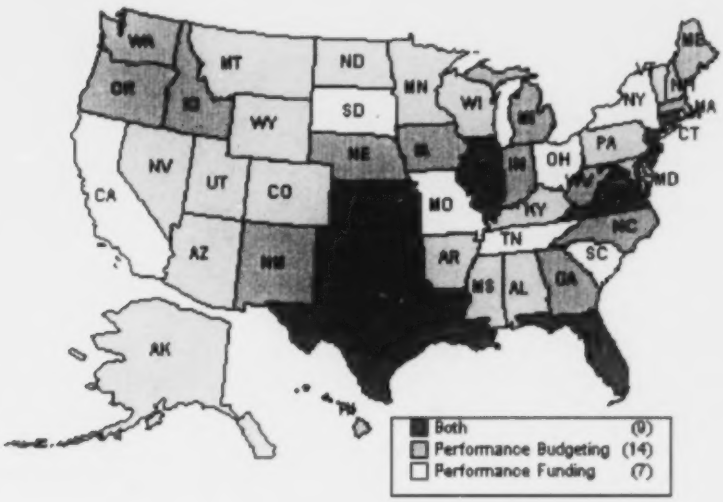
In 1999, 30 states were using either one or both of these approaches (Burke and Modaressi, 1999. See Figure 1. 1999 Status of Performance Funding and Budgeting).

Figure 1. 1999 Status of Performance Funding and Budgeting



Source: Burke & Modaressi, 1999.

Both programs contain the following two components:

- Program goals include demonstrating external accountability, improving institutional performance and meeting state needs. Securing additional funding is also a goal for state coordinating agencies and campuses.
- Performance indicators specify the areas of anticipated achievement and define how they are to be measures.

Performance funding programs also include:

- Indicator weights assign the same or different values to the indicators, or allow some campus choice.
- Success standards for the indicators include improved performance for each campus, comparisons with national and/or state peers or preset targets. Most often a combination of these standards is utilized.
- Funding levels make up a percentage of state support for campus operating budgets. The levels for current programs range from half a percent to just above 5 percent, with an average around 3 percent.

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- Allocation methods involve additional or reallocated resources, or a combination of the two. Nearly all the programs in performance funding call for additional monies.

California's Partnership for Excellence

California joined the performance funding wave in August 1998, when the Partnership for Excellence (PFE) for community colleges was signed into law. As most performance funding programs initiated in the last two years, PFE was the result of an initiative started by the Chancellor's Office of California Community Colleges and the Board of Governors of California Community Colleges. The law indicated its acceptance by the legislature and not a mandate.

According to the Chancellor's Office (1999, p. iii):

> "The Partnership for Excellence is a mutual commitment by the State of California and the California Community College System to significantly expand the contribution of the community colleges to the social and economic success of California. It is structured in phases, with substantial financial investment by the State in exchange for a credible commitment from the System to specific student and performance outcomes."

The program includes five major goals: degrees, transfers, course completion, remedial education and workforce development. For each indicator under the five goals, the State considers the 1995-96 data as baseline and provides targets to be achieved by the 107 Community College system by 2005-2006. For the first three years of funding (1998-99 through 2000-01), the allocation is prorated based on the full-time equivalent student enrollment of each community college district. By April 15, 2001, the Chancellor's Office and the Board of Governors will establish criteria by which the achievement of system goals will be assessed and the funding will be allocated. In the 1998-99 budget, PFE received $100 million that was distributed among the community college districts. The second year provided $55 million. This money rolls into the base budgets. In the following sections, the PFE features are explained in further detail and compared to performance funding programs in Florida, Illinois, Missouri, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Six State Comparison - Origin and Adoption

Most states claim both institutional improvement and public accountability as purposes for performance funding. California, Missouri and Tennessee have made institutional improvement their primary goal, whereas the other three states emphasize public accountability (see Table 1. Origin and Adoption of Performance Funding in the Six States). The adoption method is divided into three categories. In the not mandated states of California, Illinois, Missouri and Tennessee, coordinating boards and agencies and system offices adopted, designed and implemented performance funding without legislative mandate. In the mandated/not prescribed state of Florida, legislation directed adoption of a program but left the development of the detail to a coordinating agency and system officers in consultation with campus representatives. Legislation in the mandated/prescribed state of South Carolina not only required performance funding but also

prescribed all indicators. As the experiences of other states suggest, the not mandated programs appear to be most successful in terms of stability and longevity whereas mandated/prescribed programs are the most likely to be abandoned (Burke and Serban, 1998b).

Table 1. Origin and Adoption of Performance Funding in the Six States

	Motivation	Initiation	Adoption Method
CA	Institutional improvement Public accountability Funding	Chancellor's Office, Board of Governors - Community Colleges	No mandate
FL	Public accountability	Governor Legislators	Mandated/Not Prescribed
IL	Public accountability Institutional improvement	Community College Board	No mandate
MO	Institutional improvement Public accountability Meeting state needs	Higher education coordinating agency	No mandate
SC	Public accountability Institutional improvement	Legislators	Mandated/Prescribed
TN	Institutional improvement Public accountability Funding	Higher education coordinating agency	No mandate

Implementation and Evaluation

The time allowed for implementation varied among the state categories. The mandated states of Florida and South Carolina dictated tighter deadlines for implementation of these complex and controversial programs (see Table 2. Implementation and Evaluation of Performance Funding in the Six States). The not mandated states took considerable time for implementation. Tennessee, Missouri and Illinois started with pilots ranging from a 4-year period for the former to one year for the latter. California's colleges have three years to implement mechanisms that will lead to the improvement of the selected indicators. The mandated/prescribed state of South Carolina also allowed a phase-in period of three years. In this case, however, the phase in referred to the number of indicators employed – 14 in 1997-98, 26 in 1998-99 and 37 in 1999-2000 (of which 34 apply to community colleges). In California and Illinois, the program is applicable only to two-year institutions whereas in the other four states, both sectors are involved, although the programs are not necessarily identical for 2- and 4-year institutions. Of the six states, California and Tennessee have the longest set period for their indicators. In California, the same indicators will be in place until 2005-2006. Tennessee sets its indicators every five years. This allows institutions to identify and implement necessary methods for improvement. Frequent changes in indicators do not permit achievement and assessment of progress.

Table 2. Implementation and Evaluation of Performance Funding in the Six States

	Status	Groups leading implementation	Review and Revision Process	
			Frequency	By Whom
CA	Adopted August 1998; first funded 1998-99; Operational	Chancellor's Office Community college officers	Indicators set until 2005-2006 Success criteria and allocation method to be reviewed in 2001	Chancellor's Office and Board of Governors of Community Colleges
FL	Adopted May 1994; first funded 1996-97; Operational	State university system officers; community college officers	Annually	Legislature
IL	Adopted 1997; first funded 1998-99; Operational	Community College Board	Periodically	Community College Board
MO	Adopted 1991; first funded 1993-94; Operational	Higher education coordinating agency, campus presidents	Annually	Campus and higher education coordinating agency representatives
SC	Adopted April 1996; first funded 1996-78; Operational	Higher education coordinating agency; business leaders	Periodically	Higher education coordinating agency; campuses; business leaders; legislature
TN	Adopted 1979 (piloted between 1974-79); first funded 1974-1975 Operational	Higher education coordinating agency; campus presidents; campus coordinators	Every 5 years	Campus and higher education coordinating agency representatives

Indicators

The selection of performance indicators is the most challenging task of performance funding programs. The indicators reflect the concerns of state policy makers about public higher education and the priorities that a state has chosen for its institutions (Burke, 1997). Comparing the indicators in the six states is challenging. They differ in number, content and wording. Some programs cumulate different objectives in one indicator, others list them separately. Appendix 1 is an attempt to identify the major performance funding goals in the six states without listing the actual wording or number of indicators in each state.

The most common indicators for community colleges in the six states are number of transfers and job placement, employed by five states each (California does not use the latter). Number of degrees, remedial education and satisfaction surveys are the next three most common, used by four and three states, respectively. The other indicator areas show little commonalty. As expected, many of them are used only in South Carolina, which has 34 indicators for its community colleges.

Of the four states that involve both two- and four- year institutions, only Florida employs a separate set for the two-year sector. The other three use some common and some different indicators. South Carolina has 37 indicators of which 34 apply to two-year institutions. Missouri uses 8 indicators for its community colleges. Although four of the indicators are common for the two sectors, their measurement differs by sector. Tennessee has only one indicator specific to community colleges – job placement. The others are the same as for the four-year institutions, again with some variations in their measurement by sector. Illinois applies performance funding

only to two-year institutions. The program includes eight goal areas, one of which is operationalized by each district (workforce, technology or responsiveness to local needs).

The indicators in all states emphasize student learning and workforce development. Only the program in South Carolina includes measures of administrative and academic efficiency and effectiveness. This is also the only program that addresses issues such as faculty workload and evaluation. The other programs emphasize almost exclusively student outcomes.

The type of indicators reflects the emphasis of the program. The indicators fall into four categories: input, process, output and outcome. According to Burke (1997), an input is defined as the human, financial and physical resources received to support programs, activities and services. An example is new student preparation. A process is the means or method used to deliver programs, activities and services. This type includes student assessment, program review, and accreditation. An output involves the quantity of products actually produced. The number of graduates and transfers are examples of outputs. An outcome is the quality of the benefit or impact of program activities and services on students, states and society. It includes job placement and satisfaction surveys. Some of the indicators fit more than one classification.

A program that has mostly output and outcome indicators reflects the emphasis on results whereas a program that includes mostly process indicators is concerned with developing interventions and putting in place mechanisms that will eventually lead to improved results, The former category assumes that institutions will create and implement such mechanisms in order to obtain the results measured in the program. California uses only outputs. So does Florida. Illinois and Missouri combine outputs, outcomes and processes but the emphasis is still on outputs. Tennessee and South Carolina balance the outputs and processes. South Carolina is the only program that has an input component.

Indicator Weights, Success Criteria and Databases

The weighting of indicators implies a ranking or prioritization of their importance. Currently, all states except for California, where no weighting has been yet developed, assign different weights to each indicator. Essential to any performance funding program is the method used to judge the progress towards the goals set. All states, excluding California, use a combination of the following: institutional improvement and comparison against state or national peers. Institutional improvement means that the institution's progress is measured against its own past performance. This approach emphasizes the idea that each institution has its own strengths and weaknesses that must be addressed. The second criterion identifies state or national averages of peer institutions that become targets, which institutions try to achieve. California is unique in the sense that the current policy indicates that the performance will be measured for the system rather than for each institution. Whereas this approach makes performance funding more acceptable, it is unclear how the goals will be actually achieved without rewarding performance at the institutional level.

Except for Tennessee, all states have statewide databases that facilitate the calculation and tracking of the indicators (see Table 3. Indicator Weights, Success Criteria and Databases in Six States). The obvious advantage of this approach is the consistency of data and their availability in a common format.

Table 3. Indicator Weights, Success Criteria and Databases in the Six States

	Indicator Weights	Success Criteria	Databases
CA	To be developed Currently funding is not related to the indicators Money is allocated on a prorated basis using the full time equivalent student enrollment of each college	Overall system goals – targets Currently not related to funding	Statewide
FL	Specified/differ by indicator	Institutional improvement	Statewide
IL	Specified/differ by indicator	Institutional improvement	Statewide
MO	Specified/differ by indicator	Institutional improvement with comparisons with peer institutions nationally	Statewide
SC	Specified/differ by indicator	Institutional improvement with comparisons against sector targets and performance ranges	Statewide
TN	Specified/differ by indicator	Institutional improvement	Institutional

Performance Funding Levels and Allocation Methods

Currently, performance funding levels in all six states are fairly modest, the maximum reaching a little over 5% of the base budgets in Illinois and Tennessee. South Carolina, where initially performance funding was supposed to represent 100% of the budget, has settled for close to 5% as well. The reason for this low level allocated for performance relates to the argument of budget stability, on the one hand, and to the political intricacies of the budget process, on the other.

For all states, except for Tennessee and South Carolina, performance funding represents new money, on top of base budgets. In most states, the new money allocated for performance in one year becomes part of the base budgets the next year. Florida has abandoned the roll into the base budget last fiscal year. In Tennessee, performance funding comes from reallocation within the budget. Performance funding levels change annually in all states with the exception of Tennessee, where the levels are established once every five years, currently set at 5.45%. In South Carolina, 1.75% comes from the base budget and half of the new money allocated by the legislature to higher education goes to performance funding.

Illinois and South Carolina indirectly create competition between colleges. In Illinois, when funding reaches 2% of the budget, unearned funds are allocated on a competitive grant basis to institutions for projects designed to improve teaching and learning or for efforts to improve data collection for the performance funding effort. In South Carolina, unearned money is distributed to those colleges performing at or above a certain performance level.

In all states, money received is discretionary, although, in theory, institutions are expected to use it to implement strategies that will facilitate achievement of the performance goals. California is the only state where an annual report is published showing how performance funding money was spent.

Concluding Remarks

California's Partnership for Excellence is just at the beginning. Many operational aspects of the program are still to be determined. However, the program has several clear advantages compared to programs in the other states. The indicators are set until 2005-2006. The long-term use of the same indicators will provide adequate time for making progress. The first three years of funding are not related to performance, giving institutions the leverage to identify and implement mechanisms for achieving the goals of the program. However, this might also be a draw back. As the recent study of the Little Hoover Commission (2000) points out, some institutions might spend the money on areas that are not representative of the targeted areas for improvement. Performance funding money is additional and is rolled into the base. Institutions do not compete against each other, as do colleges in Illinois and South Carolina for part of the money. The number of indicators is in the low end of the six states allowing institutions to concentrate their efforts on a few areas as opposed to numerous indicators that make improvement difficult. The data are collected and tracked statewide, which provides for consistency and reduces institutional costs.

While the fate of performance funding programs is yet to be determined, it is clear that the emphasis on and interest in results in higher education will continue. It is the role of colleges to take the lead in developing approaches that will respond to this interest.

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Appendix 1. Performance Funding Categories for Two-year Institutions in California, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, South Carolina and Tennessee

Category	CA	FL	IL	MO	SC	TN	Type
Number of degrees	X	X	X	X			Output
Number of transfers	X	X	X	X	X		Output
Remedial education	X	X	X				Output/Process
Successful course completion	X						Output
Workforce development	X		X				Process/Output
Job placement		X	X	X	X	X	Outcome
Student and/or alumni and/or employer satisfaction surveys			X		X	X	Outcome
Assessment of graduates					X	X	Output/Process
Number of graduates – minority and/or economically disadvantaged and/or disabled		X		X			Output/Process
Service to local/state population Addressing community needs			X		X		Process
Retention and/or graduation rates and/or number units completed during the first year (first-time. full-time freshmen)				X	X	X	Output
Student assessment – general education and/or major						X	Process
Accreditation of academic programs					X	X	Process
Program review of academic programs						X	Process
Institutional/State planning goals					X	X	Process
Faculty workload					X		Process
Cost of non-instructional vs instructional staff					X		Process
Program duplication					X		Process
Administrative efficiencies/ Effective management					X		Process
Faculty evaluation					X		Process
Institutional cooperation					X		Process
Articulation					X		Process
New student preparation/Entrance requirements					X		Input